

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. At a computing device operable to allow an end-user to participate in a conference with at least two other conference participants, a method of displaying a video image from one of said two other conference participant, said method comprising:

adjusting an appearance of said video image in dependence on a level of activity associated with said one of said two other conference participants.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeatedly adjusting said appearance during said conference.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said adjusting comprises sizing said image in dependence on said level of activity.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein said adjusting further comprises presenting audio associated with said video image at a volume that varies in dependence on said level of activity.

5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

displaying said image in a region of said display where images of conference participants having like levels of activity are displayed.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said end-user defines an appearance of a graphical user interface for said conference, including said region for displaying said image.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein said adjusting comprises highlighting said video image with a colour indicating a level of activity.

8. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

receiving a metric indicative of said level of activity of said other

conference participant.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

decoding said video image from a stream of data received by way of a network interconnecting said computing device with computing devices of said other conference participants.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

extracting said metric from said stream of data prior to said decoding.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

sampling and encoding an image of said end-user and calculating a metric indicative of an activity associated with said end-user to be received by other computing devices in said conference.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein a quality of said decoding said video image is based on an associated metric.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

buffering an incoming stream, to allow a buffered image to be displayed as said level of activity increases.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:

encoding video associated with said end-user for transmission by way of said network.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising assessing a level of activity of said end-user and wherein said encoding video associated with said end-user comprises varying a quality of said encoding in dependence on said level of activity of said end-user.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said calculating calculates said metric based

on an amount of motion detected in said image of said end-user.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein said calculating comprises assessing a volume of audio originating with said end-user.

18. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

receiving said video image from a server.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said server ceases to provide said video image if said level of activity is below a threshold.

20. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an input of an end-user to suspend said adjusting.

21. A computer readable medium, storing computer executable instructions adapting a computing device to perform the method of claim 1.

22. A computing device storing computer executable instructions, adapting said device to allow an end-user to participate in a conference with at least two other conference participants, and adapting said device to display a video image from one of said two other conference participants and adjust an appearance of said video image in dependence on a level of activity associated with said one of said two other conference participant.

23. A computing device storing computer executable instructions adapting said device to

receive data streams, each having a bitrate and representing video images of participants in a conference;

transcode at least one of said received data streams to a bitrate different than that with which it was received, based on a level of activity associated with a participant originating said stream;

provide output data streams formed from said received data streams to

said participants.

24. The device of claim 23, wherein said software further adapts said server to not output data streams associated with inactive participants, as indicated by a level of activity associated with each of said participants and included in one of said received data streams.